



UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

2016 Resolution

120th Annual Meeting

October 13-19, 2016 ~ Greensboro, NC

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 5

APPROVED

SOURCE:

COMMITTEE ON ANIMAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

SUBJECT MATTER:

Termination of the American Veterinary Medical Association's Veterinary Medical Assistance Team Program and Participation in Disaster and Emergency Response

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) website provides this historical data: *"VMAT was founded in 1992 in the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew which caused significant damage in Florida and inflicted heavy losses on animals and the veterinary infrastructure. In 1993, the AVMA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), making VMAT part of the Federal Response Plan (now the National Response Framework) as part of the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS). In 1994, the AVMA entered into an MOU with the United States Department of Agriculture, making VMAT available to respond in the event of an animal health emergency.*

Over the years, VMAT members provided on the ground veterinary support during a number of disasters and emergencies including the Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma in 2005 and the World Trade Center Attacks in 2001 as well as many other events.

In 2008 the federal law changed, and the public-private partnership was dissolved. This led to the creation of two distinct veterinary response programs: The National Veterinary Response Teams (NVRT), part of NDMS at HHS, and the AVMA's VMAT program. These organizations collaborate, communicate and cooperate with each other on issues related to animal emergency preparedness and response. MOUs between the AVMA and HHS signed in 2008 and 2012 highlight the relationship.

With the change in the federal law, VMAT's program evolved. The current VMAT program focuses on state-level response. AVMA VMAT teams are available to deploy at the request of the state to assist in animal emergency response and deploy within the state's incident command structure. VMAT has three missions: 1) Providing on-the-ground assessment of veterinary infrastructure following a disaster. Reports provided by VMAT volunteers in the field can be utilized by State emergency response officials to direct resources to impacted areas. 2) Augmenting state veterinary response resources to provide veterinary care to animals affected by a disaster. 3) Providing training on a wide range of veterinary disaster response topics to veterinary response

organizations, veterinary medical associations, veterinary students and other related organizations through the VMAT U program.”

In June of 2016 the AVMA Committee on Disasters and Emergency Issues (CDEI) were tasked with making recommendations to the AVMA Executive Board regarding re-organization of the VMAT teams in order for the board to have background material. Termination of the program was not recommended although changing from a response unit to a preparedness unit was recommended due to the large number of states and local jurisdictions that have their own animal response teams.

On September 22, 2016, VMAT team members and CDEI committee members were notified by the Chief Executive Officer of the AVMA, Dr. Janet Donlin, that the Executive Board was discontinuing the VMAT program over a 12-18 month period of time.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) recommends that the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Board of Directors reestablish the Veterinary Medical Assistance Team program as a veterinary educational resource for veterinarians assisting animals in disasters by providing training and exercises to help build state and local capacity, by providing incident support as subject matter experts and, finally, promoting business continuity planning and disaster recovery for veterinarians.

USAHA recommends that the AVMA Committee on Disasters and Emergency Issues continue to be an active partner in animal disaster preparedness.